Daily Highlights

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UNITED NATIONS

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T U E S D A Y H I G H L I G H T S

* There is need for a streamlined, more coherent and responsive Secretariat, Secretary-General tells Working Group on Strengthening UN System.

* Secretary-General in Egypt to attend anti-terrorism summit, meets with Egyptian President.

* Commission on Status of Women begins follow-up to 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women.

* Secretary-General recommends extension of UN Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP) mandate for three months.

* Robberies, looting and intimidation of Serb civilians by armed individuals and groups continue in Sarajevo suburbs.

* Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs says Study on Emergency Assistance to Rwanda on target.

* Second WFP food shipment leaves for Democratic People's Republic of Korea.

* UNDP Arab-State Resident Representatives set new priorities.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said there is a need for a streamlined, more coherent and responsive Secretariat. In a statement to the Intergovernmental Working Group on the Strengthening of the United Nations System, the Secretary-General said there is also a need for an Organization in which all principal organs function in the balance and harmony envisioned by the Charter.

The Secretariat of the future must be comprised of a core international civil service - which constituted the independent heart of the Organization and provided experience and continuity, the Secretary-General said. "We can create a United Nations that is truly universal in its outlook, and more participatory in its methods. A United Nations with a clear mission and a well defined scope. An organization whose operations are streamlined and efficient. An organization whose approach is coherent, and whose activities are well coordinated."

According to the Secretary-General, the process of globalization was accelerating. At the same time, the forces of fragmentation were intensifying. he said these phenomena, and the new opportunities and new global problems they were creating, made the need for an effective United Nations greater than ever.

Dr. Boutros-Ghali said the United Nations agenda - containing conflicts, redressing inequalities, combatting poverty - was crucial. The United Nations would be increasingly important in addressing this agenda. But change was needed because it had been learnt that: "we must be clear about our priorities; we must shape our missions to our means; we must not spread ourselves too thin; and we must act not only on the symptoms, but also on the root causes of problems."

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Following his arrival in Egypt to attend the anti-terrorism summit, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali had a meeting with Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, according to a UN Spokesman. They talked about the importance of the summit of peacemakers, not only because it would help contain and confront terrorism on regional and international levels, but also because of the support and impetus it would give to the Middle East peace process.

In a statement in Cairo, the Secretary-General said the United Nations was ready to take the required measures to erect a framework to fight against international terrorism. He said the UN was a tool which member countries should put to work.

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Efforts should continue to carry on the work of the Beijing Conference, so that women and men would address the next millennium's problems on the basis of equality, according to the Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on gender issues, Rosario Green. In a statement to the Commission on the Status of Women which is meeting over the next two weeks on the follow-up to the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women, Assistant Secretary-General Green said that while women had come a long way, they still had some distance to cover before all their goals were attained. As such, she added, the struggle at the national level should continue to ensure that governments kept their promises with regard to women.

Ensuring that women did participate in decision-making must clearly be one of the tasks of the organizations of civil society, she added. As democratization was known for political change, the votes of women were instruments for their own advancement and for the betterment of society.

The cash crunch faced by the United Nations would cause it to curtail services affecting the work of the Commission, Nitin Desai, Under-Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Sustainable Development said. He called on the international community to ensure that the work concerning the advancement of women would be disrupted as little as possible.

The most important dimension of the Beijing Conference was the mainstreaming of a gender perspective in all the activities of the United Nations. This activity of mainstreaming was the key dimension of the interface between the work that has been done, not just in Beijing, but all of the work that has been done in the UN system on the status of women and the rest of the work of the UN on developmental issues, Mr. Desai said. By placing gender concerns squarely in the centre of policy debate and operational programmes, the Beijing Conference had stated firmly and equivocally that the world was not divided between a women's part and the rest, which would by implication be a man's part, but rather was one in which the interest of both men and women could be reflected and their distinct contributions recognized and mobilized, he added.

"Although the problems that continue to beset women manifest themselves as social issues, the root causes and the solutions lie as much in the economic area",

said the Acting Director of the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women (INSTRAW) Martha Duenas-Loaza. She said issues related to the advancement of women called for a holistic approach.

On behalf of the "Group of 77" developing countries, the representative of Costa Rica said the most important factor in the full implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action was the mobilization of new and additional resources to face the problem of poverty.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended an extension of the mandate of the United Nations Mission of Observers in Prevlaka (UNMOP), for another three months. In a report to the Security Council, the Secretary-General said the peninsula remained tense but stable. But, it was an area of potential military confrontation between the Republic of Croatia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, according to a UN Spokesman.

The negotiation process had accelerated over the past few months and both sides agreed that the presence of international observers contributed to the decrease of tension and to a more positive atmosphere for negotiations, the Secretary-General said. However, the two sides did not agree on which organization should be observing and monitoring. So in the absence of further progress on a negotiated resolution of their differences, and in the absence of agreement on an alternative organization to monitor the area, the Secretary-General considered that the continued presence of UNMOP would contribute to the decrease of tension.

There are 28 military observers from 27 countries in the Prevlaka peninsula. In mid-January, the Security Council had authorized UN military observers to continue monitoring the demilitarization of the Prevlaka peninsula for three months and said that it could be extended for an additional period of three months if necessary.

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In the former Yugoslavia, field reports say robberies, looting and intimidation of Serb civilians by armed individuals and groups continue in Ilidza and Grbavica, a UN Spokesman said today. Several dozen cases of arson were also reported Monday.

In response both the International Police Task Force (IPTF)and the Implementation Force (IFOR) increased patrols before the transfer of authority to Federation police in Ilidza today. Before departing, the Serb police in Ilidza attempted several times to set fires to their own police station, but both IPTF and IFOR prevented that from happening. They have now secured the building.

Reports from the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) say that only about 2,000 ethnic Serbs are left in Ilidza out of an estimated population of about 20,000.

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The most obvious lesson emerging from Rwanda is that prevention is the most compassionate and sane response if the international community is serious about helping communities besieged by crisis, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs, Yasushi Akashi, said today. He was addressing a meeting on the Multi-Donor Evaluation of Emergency Assistance to Rwanda, on behalf of the executive heads of humanitarian agencies.

Mr. Akashi said that none would disagree with the study's central thesis concerning the enormity of what happened in Rwanda and the profound implications of genocide. The loss of life due to avoidable circumstances compounds the tragedy. He noted that the study's analysis of constraints, lost opportunities, and recommendations was a valuable contribution to the continuing effort to address shortcomings in international response mechanisms.

Another important lesson from Rwanda was that humanitarian assistance could not substitute for political will, Mr. Akashi said. Relief in a vacuum is tantamount to managing only the symptoms of a crisis.

He said that the study's findings and recommendations would be studied closely by individual agencies of the United Nations system. Extensive reforms were already under way, he added.

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The World Food Programme's (WFP) second shipment of rice for flood victims in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea has left Bangkok for the port of Nampo, according to the WFP.

The WFP, the United Nations food aid arm, says that a WFP-chartered freighter is carrying 5,635 tons of rice, from Thailand and 903 tons of rice that the Programme is shipping to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea for Caritas.

The shipment is the second WFP consignment of rice to the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since the country suffered widespread flooding last summer. The WFP delivered an initial shipment of 5,140 tons in November last year and expects to deliver the third shipment by mid-April.

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Eighteen United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Arab-State Resident Representatives have wrapped up three days of meetings in Djibouti with a new set of priorities for the region and the beginnings of a strategy for achieving goals, according to UNDP. The priorities the group identified include new or strengthened programmes to improve governance, diversify economies, increase women's role in development, ensure sustainable supplies of food and water, and protect the environment.

UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth said his visits to a number of Arab countries had helped him identify seven priorities for the region: assistance in improving governance and aiding political transition; helping countries through economic transitions, including shifts from oil-dependent economies to diversified ones and shifts from systems dominated by the public sector to ones driven by the private sector; preventing crises, integrating societies and resolving conflict; eradicating poverty; advancing the status of women; protecting the environment; and boosting the economies and development cooperation within the region.

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WEDNESDAY HIGHLIGHTS

* Secretary-General says United Nations awaiting instructions of international community to serve as mechanism for mobilization against terrorism on global scale.

* UN to participate in Group to prepare recommendations on implementing Summit decisions.

* Sudan has not yet complied with Security Council demand to extradite suspects of assassination attempt on Egyptian President - Secretary-General reports to Security Council.

* Security Council regrets death of UNOMIG Peacekeeper in Georgia.

* Political and security situation in Somalia has not improved, Special Adviser Gharekhan tells Security Council.

* In former Yugoslavia, reports of looting, intimidation and robbery of Serb homes continue.

* ESCAP calls for rediscovery of cities as places where people live, work and anchor their lives.

* UN University co-sponsors Conference on Fate of democracy in era of globalization.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has said that the United Nations is the forum where a foundation for global action is being built, and, it is awaiting the instructions of the international community to serve as a mechanism for mobilization on a global scale against terrorism. In a statement to the Summit of Peacemakers in Sharm el-Sheikh in Egypt Wednesday, the Secretary-General noted that at last year's Special Commemorative Meeting of the General Assembly, Heads of State and Government agreed to act together against terrorism. Now, he said, "the task is to take this normative foundation as our platform for rapid and decisive action".

The Secretary-General said "no people, no part of the world any longer can feel beyond the reach of terror or terrorism". He noted that terror and terrorism have become a global phenomenon because terrorists receive arms and funds from abroad; receive instructions from abroad and take refuge abroad after committing their crime. At the same time, he said, the globalization of terrorism is sustained because countries may use terrorists to advance their aims; "because the media give

terrorists the publicity they seek; and because unilateral and even bilateral action is not enough to deal with a threat that is global".

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The United Nations will fully participate in the working group set up in the prepare recommendations on implementing the decisions of the Summit of Peacemakers. A UN Spokesman said today that the Organization will put at the disposal of the participants in the group all documents and material available to it and to its specialized agencies on the question of eliminating terrorism.

Meanwhile, in a Declaration at the end of the Summit, the participants expressed their full support for the Middle East peace process and their determination that this process continue in order to accomplish a just, lasting and comprehensive peace in the region. They also decided to support the Israel-Palestinian agreements, the continuation of the negotiating process, and to politically and economically reinforce it, and enhance the security situation for both, with special attention to the current and pressing economic needs of the Palestinians.

The Summit was co-chaired by President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt and President Bill Clinton of the United States of America and attended by a total of 27 Kings, Heads of State and Government, Crown Princes, foreign ministers and special envoys as well as Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali

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The Government of Sudan has not yet complied with the demand of the Security Council to extradite to Ethiopia the three suspects wanted in connection with the assassination attempt on Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, according to the Secretary-General. In a report, Dr. Boutros Boutros-Ghali said the Sudanese Government maintains that the Ethiopian Government has not provided it with adequate information on which to base its search for the suspects.

The Special Adviser to the Secretary-General Mr. Chinmaya Gharekhan visited the countries neighbouring the Sudan. A UN Spokesman said all the neighbouring countries visited by Mr. Gharekhan have accused the Sudan of supporting terrorist activities within their territory. The Secretary-General will continue to keep in contact with all parties concerned as well as with the Secretary-General of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) on this issue.

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Members of the Security Council have expressed regret at the death of a member of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), Lieutenant-Colonel Mohammed Hussain of Bangladesh. Council President Legwaila Joseph Legwaila of Botswana said in a statement to the media, "Members of the Security Council wish to extend their condolences to the Government of Bangladesh and the family of Colonel Hussain."

The incident occurred on Saturday, in the Abkhazia region of Georgia when Colonel Hussain's vehicle ran over an anti-tank mine. About 130 UN Observers are currently stationed in UNOMIG.

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The Security Council was briefed on Wednesday by Special Adviser Chinmaya Gharekhan on the political and security situation in Somalia. The political and security situation in Somalia has not improved and the humanitarian situation is

getting worse. A UN Spokesman said there was evidence that malnutrition and disease were once again emerging in areas which had shown significant improvement and the agencies were faced with a dilemma. Insecurity had increased the logistical difficulties and made delivery of assistance more expensive. They were having to resort more and more to airlifts to get assistance into some areas. At the same time, funding was drying up because donors appeared to be fed up with funding operations in Somalia, she said.

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In the former Yugoslavia, there are reports of the entry of federation police into Ilidza Tuesday accompanied by hundreds of Bosnians from Sarajevo and Karsen, according to a UN Spokesman. These are reported to be young thugs, many of whom looted and robbed Serb homes and resorted to intimidation of the few Serbs who remain in Ilidza. Field reports say despite the reinforced presence of the Implementation Force (IFOR), and the International Police Task Force (IPTF), intimidation, looting and harassment continued all Tuesday resulting in the UN International Police Task Force receiving a complaint every five minutes, the spokesman said.

The situation in Grbavica, the last Serb suburb scheduled for take over remains tense due to armed Serbs roaming the area, robbing, looting and harassing. Nine buildings, including a school were burnt yesterday, the spokesman continued. There are round-the-clock patrols of both IPTF and IFOR which has somewhat alleviated the situation. However, there is no Serb police remaining.

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There is a need for the rediscovery of cities as places where people live, work and anchor their lives, and not only as "economic engines or physical monuments to wealth and development, according to the Deputy Executive Secretary of the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). In an opening statement to the second Asia-Pacific Urban Forum in Bangkok, Ms. Seiko Takahashi said the region was confronted by a metamorphosis rarely seen in human history.

Ms. Takahashi drew attention to the anticipated urban transition by the year 2020, when the population of the Asia-Pacific region is expected to become predominantly urban, against a backdrop of rapid economic growth, the fastest, most massive urban population growth in history, and increasingly severe environmental impacts. The focus of discussions is a paper entitled "Living in Asian Cities: The impending crises".

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The United Nations University is co-sponsoring a Conference on The Fate of Democracy in the Era of Globalization at Wellesley College, Wellesley, Massachusetts. The 2-day event, beginning Thursday, will provide an opportunity for practitioners and academics to meet and explore the prospects for democracy in a period of increasing globalization.

The Conference seeks to address a number of issues including, how we must think about democracy in a globalizing era; the prospects for democracy at the level of the nation-state in the years ahead; the potential for democracy in international organizations; and what roles can and should the United Nations play in democratization.

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